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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-first session

Summary record of the 1313th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 10 July 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Hayashi

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Viet Nam (CEDAW/C/VNM/7-8; CEDAW/C/VNM/Q/7-8 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Viet Nam took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that Viet Nam was committed to the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and had developed a number of laws, policies and programmes in that regard. The Constitution, which had been amended in 2013, now stated that men and women were equal and prohibited gender-based discrimination. Moreover, maternity leave had been extended and sexual harassment had been banned under the revised Labour Code, wives enjoyed equal ownership of land under the revised Law on Land and spouses enjoyed equal rights and obligations in relation to common property under the revised Law on Marriage and Family. The Government had adopted various strategies, programmes and action plans with a view to empowering women, such as the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020 to ensure women's equal participation in politics, economics, culture and society and the National Programme on Gender Equality 2011-2015 to raise awareness of gender equality and women's rights. Efforts had been made to reduce maternal mortality, protect and empower ethnic minority women, combat domestic violence, and prevent children, particularly girls, from dropping out of school. As a result of those efforts, in 2012, Viet Nam had ranked 47th out of 187 countries according to the Gender Inequality Index, compared to 58th out of 136 countries in 2010.

3. All draft legislation was required to undergo gender auditing by the Committee on Social Affairs of the National Assembly, and 80 per cent of legal documents incorporated a gender perspective. With regard to political participation, 25 per cent of the members of the National Assembly were women, 50 per cent of ministries and government agencies were headed by women and 60 per cent of the provinces had female leaders. As to employment, women had filled 49 per cent of the jobs created between 2011 and 2015 and had the same unemployment rate as men.

4. Female students outnumbered male students from lower secondary education up to post-secondary education, and the percentage of women enrolled in higher education was on the rise. The Government had made considerable efforts to ensure that women enjoyed equal access to health care, particularly during pregnancy and childbirth, and special attention was given to women from ethnic minorities and remote areas. Efforts to reduce maternal mortality ratios had been successful, and Viet Nam had achieved Millennium Development Goal 5 (Improve maternal health).

5. Of the 1.8 million rural workers who had received vocational training between 2010-2014, 49 per cent had been women. Moreover, 80 per cent of women who were heads of households in need had access to low-interest loans through various credit schemes.

6. With regard to gender equality in family life, according to a joint survey conducted in 2014 by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and the Institute for Family and Gender Affairs, more than 64 per cent of the respondents had reported that men were devoting more time to housework. Moreover, the Government had stepped up efforts to combat domestic violence and to provide legal aid and support services to victims of such violence.

7. Although Viet Nam had made significant progress in the promotion of gender equality, it still faced many challenges, including deep-rooted cultural attitudes and discriminatory mindsets, the persistence of gender gaps and gender-based violence, particularly in remote areas, and a lack of financial resources to support government initiatives. It was nevertheless committed to implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and looked forward to a constructive dialogue with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the resulting recommendations.

Articles 1 to 6

8. **Ms. Patten** commended the Government on having involved various stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in the preparation of its seventh and eighth periodic reports (CEDAW/C/VNM/7-8). She asked whether the reports had been submitted to the Vietnamese parliament and whether the concluding observations of the Committee would be submitted to the parliament as well. Did Viet Nam intend to adopt a national action plan on implementation of the concluding observations? She wished to know whether ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was envisaged and whether the delegation could provide the Committee with a time frame in that regard.

9. The exact definition of "discrimination against women" under the Gender Equality Law should be clarified, as the Committee was concerned that it was limited to social and family life and not in line with the definition set forth in the Convention. Had Vietnamese courts interpreted the definition laid down in the law?

10. She asked whether Viet Nam planned to repeal discriminatory provisions relating to women's occupations and age of retirement and said that the Committee would welcome an update on the legislation under review and a time frame for the amendment or repeal of those laws. Was the Government allocating adequate financial and human resources to support effective implementation of its gender laws and policies? What steps were being taken to raise women's awareness of existing legislation? She asked whether the Government had any data on the number of cases of discrimination against women and what concrete measures had been taken to ensure women's access to justice. Did Viet Nam have a comprehensive legal aid system? The Committee was concerned that the judiciary was not paying enough attention to the application of the Gender Equality Law and wished to know if relevant training was being provided to the judiciary and law enforcement officials.

11. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that the State party's report had been submitted to the Committee on Social Affairs of the National Assembly for review prior to its submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Once the Committee's recommendations had been received, they would be presented to the Prime Minister and incorporated into an action plan. Viet Nam was committed to making gender equality and non-discrimination a reality and was considering the possibility of ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. However, the delegation could not provide the Committee with a specific time frame for the adoption and ratification of the Optional Protocol, as any proposal would have to be submitted to the Government and then to the National Assembly for approval.

12. **Mr. Nguyen** Van Binh (Viet Nam) said that in 2011 the Supreme Court had developed a strategy to promote gender equality and non-discrimination in the judiciary and provided judges with training on administering justice in gender-related cases. Similarly, prosecutors received training on prosecuting offences related to gender-based discrimination.

13. The definition of "discrimination against women" contained in article 5, paragraph 5, of the Gender Equality Law was a broad definition. Under the Constitution of 2013, gender-based discrimination was prohibited, and men and women enjoyed equal rights in all fields of life.

14. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that the Gender Equality Law had been adopted prior to the amendment of the Constitution and that if necessary, it would be revised to ensure its consistency with the amended Constitution and the Convention.

15. Harmonization of the retirement age was a complicated matter, as any amendment to the Labour Code would require consultation with the relevant stakeholders. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, 80 per cent of workers wished to maintain the five-year gap between the retirement age for women and the retirement age for men and only 20 per cent wished to eliminate it. The list of occupations from which women were barred had been established in the 1970s and the number of such occupations had already been reduced from 70 to 30. Women were barred from occupations that were deemed hazardous to them, but any occupation that was no longer deemed hazardous to women would be removed from the list.

16. **Mr. Bach** Quoc An (Viet Nam) said that Viet Nam would be reviewing its laws, by-laws and regulations to ensure their compatibility with the Constitution of 2013. With regard to access to justice for women, in 2013-2014 legal aid had been provided in 267,000 cases, 128,000 of which had involved women.

17. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao, referring to legal aid, said that Circular No. 07/2011/TT-BTP of 2011 had stated that priority should be given to certain groups, such as women survivors of domestic violence, trafficking, exploitation and sexual abuse, but that those groups had not been included in Circular No. 11/2014/TT-BTP of 2014.

18. **Ms. Patten** said that not enough attention was paid to vulnerable groups of women, such as women with disabilities, elderly women and ethnic minorities, and asked what steps were being taken to eliminate all forms of discrimination against them. She asked whether there were any laws or policies protecting women human rights defenders from reprisals and for an update on the status of women human rights defenders who had allegedly been arbitrarily arrested and were currently in detention.

19. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that in June 2015, Viet Nam had ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and drawn up a national action plan. The Government provided many programmes for persons with disabilities, including a well-funded vocational training programme.

20. The Government of Viet Nam had a special regard for older persons; reverence for older persons was a Vietnamese tradition. Older persons without means received monthly allowances; displaced older persons lived in care centres. There were plans to do much more for the older population; that would depend on the availability of budget resources.

21. Viet Nam was a country of 53 nations; there was no discrimination against ethnic minorities. Many resources were devoted to populations living in remote areas populated by such minorities. Campuses had been built to house children whose schools were far from their homes; on weekends they returned to their families. Progress had been made in combating child labour; programmes were under way to keep children in school, and out of the fields and streets, but that goal had not yet been fully achieved.

22. **Mr. Bach** Quoc An (Viet Nam) said that Circular No. 07/2011/TT-BTP had been replaced by Circular No. 11/2014/TT-BTP, which granted legal aid to all without restrictions.

23. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that Vietnamese law contained no provisions to protect human rights defenders. Only activists that caused social unrest were subject to legal measures; he knew of no cases of women activists who had been punished.

24. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of Viet Nam, together with its replies to the Committee's list of issues, demonstrated that that country had made substantial progress in the achievement of women's rights, by setting up a national legal framework and designing a strategy for the implementation of gender equality. It seemed, however, that there were three separate bodies responsible for that task: the National Committee for the Advancement of Vietnamese Women, the Viet Nam Women's Union, and the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs. Having several institutions tackle the same task was problematic; the report did not explain how those three entities coordinated and shared the work, whether there were sufficient budgetary funds and human resources for all of them, or whether measures were taken to strengthen their capacities.

25. The report also lacked information on any measures taken to improve data collection.

26. **Ms. Haidar** said that the replies of Viet Nam to the list of issues contained a list of "temporary special measures"; it showed, however, a misunderstanding of the meaning of that term. Citing the Committee's general recommendation No. 25 on article 4, paragraph 1 of the Convention, she said that paragraph 1 of article 4 called for measures to accelerate the attainment of equality, whereas paragraph 2 provided for general measures of a permanent nature. Although the delegation had invoked its National Strategy on Gender Equality 2011-2020, alternative reports cited many types of discrimination against women in Viet Nam.

27. She asked what educational, health and employment measures were in place for women, in particular rural women and women from ethnic minorities.

28. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that the Women's Union was a non-governmental organization of long standing. On becoming a State party to the Convention, Viet Nam had set up a Department for Gender Equality within the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs, thereby transferring responsibility for promoting gender equality from a non-governmental to a governmental entity, which played the lead role in that multi-ministerial task. The National Committee for the Advancement of Vietnamese Women had been established to advise and coordinate the work of the ministries concerned. Each of the latter presented an annual budget plan for their work on the advancement of women. Although members of the Women's Union paid dues, the Government covered a part of its budget.

29. In addition, the budget of the National Strategy on Gender Equality funded gender-equality training for the staff members of the ministries, and for members of the relevant civil society organizations.

30. The General Statistics Office conducted surveys to gather statistics for use by the ministries. The Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs issued quarterly updates on the labour market, showing figures on male and female employment rates. On the basis of the Committee's recommendations, the Government would expand the applicable indicators.

31. **Mr. Nguyen** Van Binh (Viet Nam) said that many temporary special measures had been established to promote gender equality in the workplace, including protection against dismissal during maternity leave and during child-rearing years, and time allotted for breastfeeding and rest. Draft decrees had been prepared and submitted for review. Among other measures, incentives would be granted to

companies for hiring more female workers and priority would be given to women candidates for jobs. In addition, inspection measures would be strengthened to ensure compliance with those and other regulations.

32. **Ms. Pham** Thanh Binh (Viet Nam) said that three categories of persons were targeted by temporary special measures in the area of health care: persons with HIV/AIDS, older persons, and persons living in poverty. Under the HIV/AIDS programme, support was given to families of persons with that illness. Circulars had been issued giving guidance on preventing HIV infection, and announcing compulsory HIV testing. A circular had also been issued with regard to care for older persons and by 2016 all poor persons would have access to free health services, with a choice between local and centralized services.

33. On another question, she said that a dedicated radio channel had been set up for sharing policy information with members of ethnic minorities.

34. **Mr. Tran** Kim Tu (Viet Nam) said that assistance was given to children living in difficult regions, to enable them to attend school: for example, kindergarten pupils benefited from lunch subsidies and children of ethnic minorities attending school away from home were given housing and education grants. The boarding school system allowed students to spend Monday to Friday at school; they then returned to their family homes on weekends. However, many children attended school far from their homes.

35. Ethnic groups with more than 300 members received many special benefits, including transportation grants and university scholarships. There were members of ethnic minorities throughout the Government, including at the ambassadorial and ministerial levels. All ethnic groups were equal; those in difficult situations received subsidies and other forms of support.

36. **Ms. Haidar** said that all the measures cited were general social policies, as called for in article 4, paragraph 2 of the Convention. She had learned of no particular policies that would qualify as temporary special measures, as provided for in article 4, paragraph 1, which were measures to accelerate the attainment of equality between men and women.

37. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that the Government's understanding of temporary special measures perhaps differed from that of the Committee. However, the delegation would read general recommendation No. 25 more carefully and the State would take the input of the Committee into account when implementing the National Action Plan.

38. **Ms. Nadaraia** said that she would appreciate more information on the involvement of women's organizations and groups in the implementation of national policies and measures on gender equality. She wondered whether the Government was open to cooperating with a broader spectrum of women's organizations in addition to the ones already mentioned in the State party's report.

39. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that a number of organizations, including the Women's Union, were invited to cooperate with the Government in the drafting of laws and legal documents pertaining to gender equality. Many State ministries also encouraged the participation of such organizations in the development and implementation of laws, programmes and policies related to the same issue.

40. **Ms. Hofmeister** said that patriarchy continued to prevail in Viet Nam, as indicated by the strong preference for sons in society and the imbalance in the sex ratio at birth owing to female foeticide. She asked whether efforts had been undertaken to change patriarchal attitudes, and whether programmes had been initiated in rural areas in particular to stop female foeticide, the death of young girls as a result

of undernourishment, and other harmful practices, including incest, early marriage and early pregnancy.

41. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao said that, according to alternative sources, more than half of all Vietnamese women fell prey to emotional, physical or sexual domestic violence in their lifetime. Violence against women in public places and among young people were also serious issues that needed to be addressed in the State party. Another concern was that reconciliation was often used as a means of addressing domestic violence, particularly at the grass-roots level, which resulted in a low rate of women reporting such cases and, consequently, a low conviction rate. The fact that perpetrators thus remained unpunished would ultimately conduce to the commission of more serious acts of violence against women.

42. The Committee wished to know whether programmes and training courses were available to raise awareness of violence against women among law enforcement officials, members of the judiciary, and women themselves; whether measures were in place to prohibit the use of reconciliation as a means of resolving cases of domestic violence; how women were encouraged to report such violence; and what steps had been taken to implement the Committee's recommendation to research gender-based violence in order to improve the way in which State intervention was targeted.

43. As far as support services were concerned, shelters for victims of domestic violence were heavily dependent on foreign donors and those who worked in such services often lacked specialized knowledge and skills. Had the Government allocated a specific budget to improve the quality of support services, and were educational capacity-building programmes available for service providers?

44. **Ms. Jahan** said that the delegation should indicate whether the definition of trafficking in the Law on Human Trafficking would be brought into line with the definition contained in the Palermo Protocol, and whether the Law on Vietnamese guest workers would be revised to make it more gender-sensitive. With regard to victim identification, protection and rehabilitation, most female victims escaped from exploitation before the crime was officially registered in the destination country, which meant that they were denied assistance as, under the law, victims had to be recognized by the authorities in both the source and the destination country before they were offered statutory assistance. Victim identification needed to be strengthened through clear guidelines, training of law enforcement officials, and an adequate budget. Comments would be appreciated on whether the State party intended to develop a national mechanism for victim support, on measures taken to provide support services in rural areas and to improve witness protection in order to encourage victims to report cases of trafficking, on efforts undertaken by foreign embassies to prevent the trafficking of newborn babies and the trafficking of women through so-called international marriages, and on measures to simplify the administrative process for obtaining permanent residence for children of trafficked women seeking to return to Viet Nam.

45. Another area of concern was the fraudulent measures used by employment agencies to hire women. She asked how the Government monitored or sanctioned such agencies.

46. In reference to prostitution, alternative sources suggested that the number of prostitutes in Viet Nam was higher than the figure provided by the State party. She wondered what was being done to improve the economic situation of girls so that they did not have to resort to prostitution, particularly in the case of girls in rural areas, and how the Government addressed the issue of reintegrating former prostitutes into society.

47. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that it was true that Viet Nam was to some extent a patriarchal society. Children were often considered as pension funds owing to the fact that many Vietnamese did not receive pensions which, in turn, led to the preference for boys over girls. The Government had prohibited clinics from revealing the sex of foetuses in an attempt to prevent foeticide under the national programme aimed at reducing the imbalance in the sex ratio at birth. Another programme had been launched to improve social security and a voluntary insurance scheme had been introduced as well.

48. The State also provided financial assistance to the most vulnerable groups in society so that they could enjoy a pension when they retired. Such groups included women in the informal sector, ethnic minorities and people living in remote areas. Moreover, the Government had launched a media campaign aimed at giving women more of a voice in political and family life, and subsidies had been introduced for families with single-sex children; the main beneficiaries of the subsidies were families composed of parents with daughters only.

49. **Mr. Bach** Quoc An (Viet Nam) said that the Criminal Code was currently being revised to take account of the Convention by strengthening provisions on the trafficking of women and children. In addition, a circular was currently being drawn up as a guide to the implementation of victim assistance. Since 2012, five training courses had been held for members of the judiciary and law enforcement officials on the topic of relevant international human rights treaties, such as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo Protocol). Furthermore, programmes to prevent trafficking had been aligned with socioeconomic development schemes and agreements had been signed with other countries to increase international cooperation in that field.

50. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs had set up hotlines in two border regions and in certain provinces so that people could report cases of trafficking and sexual abuse. A project had also been launched to train social workers in providing advice to the most vulnerable groups in society. Other measures taken to prevent vulnerable women from being exploited included a funding programme for disadvantaged women from ethnic minorities with newborn babies, and a pilot programme that involved offering financial assistance to disadvantaged families so that they could send their daughters to school, and ensuring that pregnant women received health check-ups. The pilot programme had been introduced in six provinces and would later be replicated nationwide.

51. **Mr. Nguyen** Van Binh (Viet Nam) said that the Criminal Code provided for strict sanctions against persons who directly or indirectly forced women into prostitution, and against the clients of young female prostitutes. A new approach to the issue of prostitution had been taken in 2014, laying emphasis on offering support services to women who no longer wished to work as prostitutes. More than 1,000 initiatives had been introduced across various provinces in Viet Nam to assist former sex workers in reintegrating into communities. Non-governmental organizations were also encouraged by the State to help such women in their endeavours to start a new life.

52. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that it was difficult to obtain reliable statistics concerning the number of prostitutes because the practice was considered taboo and women were therefore unwilling to declare themselves as prostitutes. However, legal advice, psychological assistance, vocational training and low-interest loans were available to women who no longer wished to work as prostitutes.

53. **Ms. Jahan** said that she would appreciate information on the issue of the exploitation of Vietnamese women who acted as surrogate mothers for clients both within the State party and abroad.

54. **Mr. Bach** Quoc An (Viet Nam), responding to a question asked earlier by Ms. Zou Xiaoqiao, said that communities preferred to resolve conflicts amicably and that reconciliation was the traditional method for doing so. Reconciliation could be used to resolve many kinds of dispute, including domestic disputes, and was always voluntary. It was true that reconciliation was used to resolve many cases of domestic violence. Social workers had a role in helping the parties concerned to find a solution that would preserve the integrity of the family structure. While the reconciliation method had proven to be largely successful, cases of domestic violence could still be brought before the courts.

55. The Law on Marriage and Family set out the conditions governing the practice of surrogacy. If Vietnamese women acted as surrogate mothers for foreign nationals, they did so outside the national territory. The Government facilitated the return of Vietnamese women who had acted in that capacity abroad and provided them with the necessary assistance. Upon their return to Viet Nam, the children born to Vietnamese mothers abroad were registered and provided with a permanent residency document.

56. **Mr. Doan** Mau Diep (Viet Nam) said that, upon repatriation, female victims of trafficking were sent to temporary shelters where they underwent a medical examination and were given psychological support by social workers. The Government covered the cost of their stay in the shelter and referred them to vocational training centres to facilitate their search for employment when they returned to their hometown. Moreover, employers were instructed to give special consideration to female victims of trafficking when making recruitment decisions.

57. The Government had set up a dedicated website providing Vietnamese guest workers with information on trustworthy recruitment agencies, the permits required to work abroad and employment contracts. Potential guest workers were advised to accept employment only from recruitment agencies and companies listed on the website and to report any unlawful activity. Government representatives were posted to countries where there were large numbers of Vietnamese guest workers to provide consular assistance. However, despite the Government's efforts to protect guest workers, a considerable number had still been deceived into accepting fraudulent job offers from unregistered companies. The Government intended to strengthen the safeguards in place against such unlawful activity.

Articles 7 to 9

58. **Ms. Leinarte** said that the State party was to be commended on having developed a robust legal framework to ensure that women were adequately represented in the public and political life of the country. Women accounted for 24 per cent of the deputies of the National Assembly, which was higher than the current Asian average. However, women were poorly represented in the People's Councils. The Committee was pleased to note that 50 per cent of government ministries and agencies had appointed women to key decision-making positions but regretted that women held only 7 per cent of director positions. In addition, there were still far too few women serving as ambassadors in the diplomatic service. Noting that the National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2011-2020 included a target to increase the proportion of women participating in the Party Committee during the term 2016-2020 to over 25 per cent, and the proportion of female deputies in the National Assembly and People's Councils to over 35 per cent during the term 2016-2020, she asked what temporary special measures had been adopted to help achieve that target.

59. Despite the above-mentioned legal framework and the issuance of a decree prescribing penalties for civil servants who failed to comply with legislation to promote gender equality, the participation of women in the public and political life of the country remained limited, primarily on account of the patriarchal attitudes that continued to pervade Vietnamese society. She asked what measures the State party envisaged taking to change patriarchal attitudes and behaviour patterns in Vietnamese society; whether awareness-raising campaigns targeting senior government officials had been launched; whether those officials had been provided with special training on gender equality; whether leadership training was available to female candidates to elected bodies; whether civil society organizations could operate without restriction in the State party; and whether perpetrators of attacks against women's rights activists were systematically prosecuted and punished.

60. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao said that the Committee welcomed the steps taken by the State party to prevent and reduce statelessness, including through the reform and implementation of the newly amended Nationality Law of 2008. Under that law, more than 2,000 stateless women had been granted Vietnamese nationality in 2013. However, there were still some 800 stateless women residing in the national territory who, having renounced their Vietnamese nationality, were at a greater risk of falling victim to human trafficking and arbitrary detention and often struggled to exercise their basic rights. She asked what measures the State party had taken to expedite the process of granting those women Vietnamese nationality and whether it had decided to ratify the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, as recommended during the universal periodic review pertaining to Viet Nam in 2009.

61. The Committee had received reports that female asylum seekers and refugees were often denied access to employment, education and health care. She requested the delegation to comment on those reports and to provide additional information on the general situation of female asylum seekers and refugees in Viet Nam. The State party should refer to the Committee's general recommendation No. 32 on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women for guidance on how to fulfil its obligations and to guarantee the rights of those women under the Convention.

62. **Mr. Pham** Ngoc Tien (Viet Nam) said that the Law on the Election of National Assembly Deputies provided that women should account for at least 35 per cent of electoral candidates. In 2015, the National Committee on the Advancement of Women and the Women's Union had launched campaigns to raise public awareness of the important role played by women in the political life of the country. Leadership training had also been dispensed to female electoral candidates.

63. **Mr. Bach** Quoc An (Viet Nam) said that the Government had made significant progress in reducing statelessness in the national territory. Vietnamese nationality could not yet be granted to the 800 stateless women referred to previously, as they did not possess the necessary proof of identity. In such cases, the Vietnamese authorities contacted the competent authorities in the woman's country of origin to verify her identity. The Nationality Law provided that stateless persons living in Viet Nam were entitled to apply for Vietnamese nationality and that, once they had done so, the Government had a responsibility to guarantee their rights.

64. **Mr. Pham** Ngoc Tien (Viet Nam) said that the Government was currently examining the possibility of ratifying the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees but that it first needed to consolidate its legal framework in order to be able to fulfil its obligations under those instruments.

Articles 10 to 14

65. **Ms. Haidar** said that, despite the State party's efforts to improve access to education for all girls in Viet Nam, many girls from ethnic minority or disadvantaged backgrounds still struggled to access good-quality education. The education-related objectives of the action plan for gender equality covering the period 2012-2015 were to be commended. She asked how the implementation of that action plan was monitored and evaluated; whether sufficient budgetary resources had been allocated to support its implementation; and what progress had been made towards achieving the objectives to date.

66. She also wished to know what steps the State party had taken to remove gender-based stereotypes from textbooks and other learning materials; how the State party guaranteed girls access to the technical and vocational training required for jobs that were traditionally performed by boys; and whether the State party had taken steps to improve its methodology for collecting and analysing data disaggregated by sex. Noting that the literacy rate of girls from ethnic minority backgrounds was extremely low and that no budgetary resources were available for literacy programmes, she wished to know whether the State party had considered educating those girls in their mother tongue so that they were not deprived of an education.

67. **Mr. Bruun** said that the State party was to be commended on having ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) and on having adopted a new Labour Code in 2012 prohibiting gender-based discrimination. However, the Committee was concerned that such laws could be difficult to enforce in practice owing to the absence of an effective oversight mechanism. While the level of female participation in the labour market was high, a significant gender-wage gap continued to exist. He asked what measures the State party was taking to remedy that disparity. The Committee had received reports that discriminatory recruitment practices often prevented women from securing employment and that women were still precluded from performing certain jobs, which limited their participation in the job market and their earning potential. He asked whether the State party had considered revising the legal provisions that could lead to women being discriminated against or being placed at a disadvantage in the employment sector.

68. Noting that the new Labour Code prohibited sexual harassment in the workplace but that it did not prescribe penalties or define employers' responsibilities in such cases, he asked whether the State party intended to address those lacunae; whether the Labour Code contained a clear definition of sexual harassment; how many cases of sexual harassment had been reported since the entry into force of the new Labour Code; and whether it provided for a complaints mechanism. Lastly, he wished to know what the State party was doing to protect the large number of female migrant workers who were currently working as domestic workers in Viet Nam and whether the State party was planning to ratify the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

69. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that the Committee welcomed the significant progress made by the State party in improving women's access to health care and, in particular, to maternity and infant health care. Noting that the general maternal mortality rate had decreased significantly in Viet Nam in recent years, she asked whether it had also decreased in rural and mountainous areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. If that was not the case, how did the State party intend to address that problem? She asked whether the State party planned to transform the temporary special measures that it had taken to improve women's access to health care and raise awareness of women's health issues into measures of a more long-term nature.

70. The Committee had received reports that many women did not receive the requisite number of prenatal check-ups, which was a major cause for concern on account of the high rate of early pregnancy in the State party. She requested the delegation to comment on those reports. Furthermore, noting that the spread of HIV/AIDS was a growing problem in Viet Nam, she enquired as to the general prevalence of the condition among women, the main causes of infection and the forms of treatment prescribed. Lastly, she noted with concern that the onus for using contraception tended to fall on women, not on men. She asked whether the State party had taken steps to promote the use of contraception as a part of safe sexual relations as opposed to simply a means of preventing pregnancy.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.